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ABSTRACT

A study investigated the reading achievement of participants in the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library's incentive-based summer reading program. Subjects, 44 first, second, and third grade students from 23 different local public schools who had participated in the summer reading program at 4 inner-city brances of the public library, completed a brief survey and were administered the reading comprehension and vocabulary subtest of the California Achievement Test. Scores were compared to those obtained from the Indiana State Tests of Educational Progress administered before the summer reading program. While the results of the study are limited by the small sample size and the unknown impact of regular school instruction following the pretest, results indicated that students maintained the reading levels exhibited in the pretests. Results also indicated that (1) the average participant in the summer program read 50 books; (2) interactive reading with significant others was reported; and (3) the participants expressed positive attitudes about the summer reading program. (Six tables of data are included; 23 references are attached.) (RS)

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A STUDY OF THE INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY'S SUMMER READING PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN

Final Report

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A STUDY OF THE INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY'S SUMMER READING PROGRAM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A well-accepted axiom in education is that children learn to read by reading and by being involved in programs where there are meaningful opportunities to read. It is presumed that children who read and thus develop a love for reading will build a lifelong reading habit. It is goals such as these that have prompted public libraries to implement summer reading programs to involve children with reading during the period when they are out of school.

Five years ago, the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library changed its summer reading program to include a menu of incentives tied to the number and types of books read. Readers could choose from a number of options, ranging from bookmarks to food, books, and free passes to the zoo. This program has experienced phenomenal growth in the number of participants. Prior to 1984 fewer than 4,000 children participated in the summer program. Since the introduction of incentives, this participation has increased to almost 31,000 readers in 1989.

Prior to this study, the success of the program was reviewed in terms of increased numbers of participants and related increases in book circulation. The impact on participants' reading levels had not been examined. During the summer of 1989, a limited study to test whether participants' reading achievement is being impacted was undertaken. The study focused on four inner city branch library sites on the supposition that higher proportions of low achieving readers might be participants at those sites in order to examine particularly the implications for the summer reading program on low achieving readers.

While the results are limited by a small sample size, the study's major hypothesis was satisfied: participants in the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library's summer reading program maintained the reading achievement levels exhibited at the time of the statewide achievement testing. This conclusion is confounded, however, by the unknown impact of regular school instruction following the pretest in March, 1989.

The study also confirmed that many books are being read; the "average" participant in this study reported reading at least 50 books as part of the program. Interactive reading with significant others was commonly reported. The participants expressed positive attitudes about the summer reading program, frequently listing the incentive prizes and liking reading or books as specific reasons.

Introduction

Summer reading programs for children are a popular way for libraries to encourage children to read. Such programs often operate from an assumption that children learn to read (and to love to read) by reading and that summer reading prevents regression of reading achievement while school is not in session. While public libraries have operated these programs over the years, there has been a wide range in the success with which these programs have involved young readers.

The Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library has operated a summer reading program for children since 1919, but in the past five years this program has experienced phenomenal success in student participation. In 1984 the program enrolled fewer than 4,000 students. In 1985 an incentive-based summer reading program was initiated and the public response to the program increased dramatically.

The incentive-based reading proved to be a popular program with the public. The number of children and adults participating in the summer reading program increased to 14,300 in 1985. Participation in the program increased dramatically in each of the next four years, with approximately 31,000 participants registered in 1989.

In the new program, children and adults reading to children could earn points based on the number and type of books read. The points ranged from 5 points for a preschool picture book to 25 points for a book from a Bonus List of Accelerated Reading. The points earned could be cashed in for food coupons, trips, bookmarks, books, and other prizes from a menu of choices. Many of these prizes were in-kind contributions from corporate sponsors, such as McDonald's, Hardee's, General Cinema, Indianapolis Zoo, King's Island, and Marsh Supermarkets.

All library sites actively participate in the summer reading program. In 1988, the last year for which data are available, over 714,000 books were read. This represents an average of 25 books per participant that year.

While the participation numbers and circulation counts indicate a successful program, no empirical evidence has been gathered to test whether students participating in the program are maintaining their reading skills. This study examined evidence relative to that issue. Pretest and posttest data were gathered for a sample of students who participated in the summer reading program to test the hypothesis that these students maintained or increased their reading achievement levels as compared to their reading levels at the end of the school year. Four inner-city Indianapolis-Marion County Branch Libraries were chosen as study sites based on the supposition that higher proportions of low achieving students might be participants at those locations. These scores and a related survey constitute the data for this study.

Review of the Literature

Although the phenomenon of students' loss of reading skills over the summer is frequently reported informally by teachers and is a generally-accepted occurrence, there is relatively little research on this problem in the educational literature. Most of the reported studies focus on the effect of instructional intervention during the summer; only one study was found which directly measured the effect of a library summer reading program. The findings among the various studies did not produce a strong consensus about a summer reading regression effect.

Some studies indicated that, in general, summer regression is not a significant factor on reading achievement. In 1978 Perez conducted a study of 84 first through fifth graders; students who received reading instruction during the summer were excluded from the study. He concluded that there was no significant loss in reading ability in this sample. McCormick and Mason's 1981 study of 66 kindergarten students similarly concluded that kindergarten children continue to progress in their knowledge about reading without formal instruction during the summer.

The majority of studies on the effects of summer reading have focused on compensatory education students. Each of the seven studies reviewed involved some type of reading instructional program; the findings from the studies were mixed. Gains were reported from some studies. A 1982-1983 New York City Public Schools' study of summer instruction for 4th and 7th grade students retained in grade showed comparable gains in reading two years in a row. A 1985 study of the Portland, Oregon, elementary summer school program showed that remedial as well as gifted/talented students made reading gains, while retained students did less well.

Other studies reported summer programs helped students hold their own in reading. A 1982 study by Cornelius and Semmel reported that learning disabled students' reading scores regressed without summer instruction, but such regression was stemmed for students who received five weeks of summer instruction. Cortez and Hotard's 1984 study of Chapter 1 remedial students found that loss of reading skills was minimal or non-existent after computer-assisted instruction during the summer.

One study found that there were no differences in the summer reading gains/losses between remedial and non-remedial students. A 1978 study funded by the National Institute of Education reported that no loss of reading achievement for compensatory education students and found no significant differences between remedial and non-remedial students' achievement across the summer.

Two studies reported remedial students made no loss, but also made less progress than their non-remedial counterparts. A study funded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1981 reported that compensatory education students in summer school showed no loss, but made less progress that non-remedial students. This finding is similar to the results reported in 1979 from a four-year study of

Title I (now Chapter 1) summer school students in Cincinnati, Ohio. These researchers reported that remedial students showed no absolute loss (when pre-posttest scores were measured by the same norms), but showed a relative loss compared to their non-remedial peers when measured by national norms.

There were three studies of motivational reading programs operated through public schools which involved no direct instruction for students. One of these programs provided 10-lesson instructional packets for students to complete at home with parents; the program measured no discernible impact on reading achievement. A 1981 Hawaiian program for 25 low SES first and second graders which gave free paperback books to children showed significant gains in first grade vocabulary scores, but no significance in comprehension or with second graders. A 1976 study of an elementary reading motivation program compared to summer basal instruction and school-related summer activities showed the program based on students' reading interests made significant gains compared to the other types of intervention.

The single study of a public library's summer reading program for children was done in Normal, Illinois, in 1984 and involved 279 students, grades two through six. A comparison of pretest-posttest scores for summer reading program participants and non-participants found that participants made a statistically-significant increase on vocabulary scores and a statistically-nonsignificant increase on comprehension scores. It also found that the number of books read by children during the summer did not seem to be as important as the fact that the children enrolled in the summer reading program.

In summary, this literature suggests that there is not clear evidence of loss of reading skills during the summer, but that most summer reading programs are predicated on the assumption that without the assistance provided by these programs, there would be a loss in reading achievement, particularly for low-achieving students. Success was often reported as maintenance of reading score rather than a gain in reading achievement. There was a wide variety in the contexts, variables, and findings among the studies reviewed; in the absence of more definitive evidence, any further conclusions of the these data should be made cautiously.

Sample of Students

Identification of the study sample began with a review of approximately 2250 summer reading program registration forms from the four branch library sites. The primary criterion for selecting students was age -- those likely to have been in the grades 1, 2, 3, or 6 during the 1988-89 school year and tested by the Indiana State Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP) -- and enrollment in the Indianapolis Public Schools. Approximately 90% of the summer reading program participants at these libraries were I.P.S. students.

The parents of 782 potential study participants who met these criteria were mailed an information letter and permission request form. Signed parental permission forms were received for 138

students, and these students were scheduled for the posttesting sessions. Forty eight (48) of the 138 students scheduled to take the posttest participated as scheduled and were posttested in early August, 1989.

The data for these 48 students were used as the base for the study. The single sixth grade student was dropped from the study; valid program conclusions could not be drawn from a single student's scores. Matching pretest data could not be located for three students. The final study included 44 first, second, and third grade students enrolled in a total of 23 different I.P.S. schools during the 1988-89 school year.

The first and third grade groups were approximately equal (16 and 17 students respectively) with a smaller number (11) of second grade students. Approximately half of the students (53%) were participating in the summer reading program for the first time. First graders were about twice as likely to be new to the program as repeat participants; second and third graders were fairly evenly split between new and returning participants.

Data Collected and Reviewed

The study sample included 44 first, second and third grade students. These students completed a brief survey about their participation in the summer reading program and were administered the reading comprehension and vocabulary subtests from the California Achievement Test (Form E, 1985 edition) in August, 1989. The scores from these tests became posttests which were compared to the students' pretests from the Indiana State Tests of Educational Progress (ISTEP). The national norms for ISTEP are based on the CAT norms, and, thus, allowed for direct comparison of pretest and posttest scores. The same norms table (QM26) was used to score the pretest and the posttest; gain scores are stated in terms of absolute gain.

The matched pretest-posttest data were compared for three scores: total reading, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. Six different scales were used to review gain scores:

1. objective mastery scores
2. number correct (raw score)
3. scale scores
4. normal curve equivalents (NCEs)
5. stanines
6. national percentiles.

Data were reviewed based on the total sample (grades 1-3 combined), each separate grade level, each of the four library sites, and whether students were first year or continuing participants in the program. Comparisons centered on students who maintained or gained in reading achievement compared to those for whom achievement losses were measured.

A variety of statistics were used in reviewing these data. These included:

- Pearson product moment correlations
- t-test (test for significance)
- chi square (test for significance)
- frequency distributions
- means and standard deviations
- minimum-maximum range
- standard error of measurement
- variance
- normality of distributions (mean, median,mode)
- skewness and kurtosis
- quartiles and semi-interquartile ranges
- cumulative frequencies and percentages
- binomial test of significances
- Wilcoxin Matched Pairs Sign Test

Summary of Findings

Survey Findings

The incentive points earned by students as reported on the student surveys ranged from 5 to 600; half of the students reported earning at least 275 points. The number of incentive points earned appeared to be unrelated to whether participants' reading achievement posttest scores reflected gains, losses, or were maintained at the same level. Table 1 illustrates this point.

Table 1

Incentive Points / Posttest Results

Participants --	Maintained or Gained	Loss
More than 275 Points:	34%	17%
Less than or equal to 275 Points:	31%	17%

Students reported reading as few as seven (7) and as many as 100 books during the program. Half of the students stated they had read at least 50 books, while a third of the sample reported reading 20 or fewer books. Approximately one-third of the students did not report how many books they read.

A high proportion of the sample reported reading books "by myself" (86%) and with their family (89%). Students were more likely to read with their mothers (69%) or sisters (52%) than with fathers (20%) or brothers (25%).

When reporting their favorite part of the summer reading program, more than 60% of the students said they like the prizes best. Second and third graders were more likely to cite this reason (65% and 72%) than first graders (less than 50%). Approximately half of the students mentioned liking reading or books as a favorite part of the program. These statements included: "I like reading" (31%); "reading is fun" (7%); "I like reading different books" (5%); and "I am learning to read better" (5%).

Findings from Test Data

The results from the six different scales used to report gain scores were reviewed as part of the final report. Since there were only minor variations across these scales, the discussion of findings is focused on the median national percentile results. In addition to having representative results comparable to the other data, national percentiles are a common reporting metric and more easily understood than some of the other scales.

Total Group Results

The pretest-posttest results for the total group of 44 students is summarized by median percentiles as follows:

Table 2

ISTEP/CAT Score	Pretest (range)	Posttest (range)
Total Reading	67 (14 - 99)	73.5 (10 - 99)
Reading Comprehension	61.5 (10 -99)	70.5 (10 - 99)
Vocabulary	66 (11 - 99)	74 (11 - 99)

Overall gains were noted for each subtest score. In each area, scores covered a wide range for both pretests and posttests. (See Figure 1.)

Chi square tests were statistically significant at the .05 level. Accordingly, the maintenance and gains in achievement were unlikely to have occurred by chance. Corresponding t-tests of the change scores suggested that there was no significant gain or loss; therefore, the achievement levels were maintained.

Grade 1 Results

The pretest-posttest results for the total group of 16 first graders is summarized by median percentiles as follows:

Table 3

ISTEP/CAT Score	Pretest (range)	Posttest (range)
Total Reading	70 (15 - 99)	82 (28 - 99)
Reading Comprehension	67 (10 - 99)	81.5 (26 - 99)
Vocabulary	69 (22 - 97)	79.5 (34 - 97)

Results for the first grade sample closely parallel those for the total sample, with the exception that the minimum range is somewhat higher. This sample's total reading median national percentile of 70

compares with a median percentile of 50 for Indianapolis Public School's first graders and of 65 for Indiana first graders, overall. (See Figure 2.)

Chi squares were significant at the .05 level in total reading and reading comprehension. This means that the maintenance or gains in achievement were unlikely to have occurred by chance; vocabulary maintenance or gains could have occurred by chance. The t-test for total reading was significant at the .05 level. Overall, the t-test results indicated that the achievement levels were maintained with no significant gain or loss.

Grade 2 Results

The pretest-posttest results for the 11 second grade students are summarized by median percentiles as follows:

Table 4

ISTEP/CAT Score	Pretest (range)	Posttest (range)
Total Reading	57 (21 - 90)	68 (10 - 99)
Reading Comprehension	48 (14 - 86)	58 (10 - 94)
Vocabulary	55 (21 - 91)	66 (11 - 99)

Again, overall gains were noted for each subtest score. However, the median scores for second graders were lower that those noted for the total group and first graders, and the ranges were slightly smaller. This sample's total reading median national percentile of 57 is compared with Indianapolis Public School's second grade median percentile of 45 and Indiana's overall second grade median percentile of 64. (See Figure 3.)

In the absence of very dramatic change scores, the application of statistical tests to such a small sample (N = 11) is unlikely to produce significant results due to size limitations. Neither the chi square nor the t-tests were significant for this sample. Because of the small sample, it is impossible to draw firm conclusions as to whether the maintenance or gain scores occurred by chance.

Grade 3 Results

The pretest-posttest results for the 17 third graders in the sample reported in median percentiles are as follows:

Table 5

ISTEP/CAT Score	Pretest (range)	Posttest (range)
Total Reading	69 (14 - 95)	73 (16 - 99)
Reading Comprehension	68 (19 - 98)	61 (19 - 98)
Vocabulary	73 (11 - 98)	71 (14 - 98)

The third grade scores showed slight losses in two of the three scores. The range of scores was comparable to the first grade scores. The sample's total reading median national percentile of 69 compares to a median percentile of 44 for Indianapolis Public School's third graders and 64 for Indiana third graders, overall. (See Figure 4.)

The chi square tests were not significant. This means the measured losses could have occurred by chance. The corresponding t-tests were also not significant. The achievement levels were maintained without significant gain or loss.

Results Reported by Library Sites

The pretest-posttest results reported separately for each of the four library sites in median percentiles is as follows:

Table 6

ISTEP/CAT Score	Pretest (range)	Posttest (range)
Emerson Branch Library (N = 7)		
Total Reading	68 (27 - 96)	77 (22 - 97)
Reading Comprehension	57 (22 - 99)	68 (30 - 98)
Vocabulary	66 (34 - 93)	83 (17 - 97)
Flanner House Branch Library (N = 10)		
Total Reading	64 (23 - 99)	70 (30 - 99)
Reading Comprehension	57.5 (22 - 98)	64.5 (30 - 98)
Vocabulary	65 (20 - 83)	70 (28 - 99)
Prospect Branch Library (N = 9)		
Total Reading	83 (32 - 99)	84 (40 - 94)
Reading Vocabulary	85 (25 - 99)	61 (28 - 98)
Vocabulary	73 (22 - 97)	74 (43 - 99)
West Indianapolis Branch Library (N = 17)		
Total Reading	65 (14 - 99)	73 (10 - 99)
Reading Comprehension	62 (10 - 99)	76 (10 - 99)
Vocabulary	55 (11 - 98)	69 (11 - 99)

In general, the pretest-posttest results for each site are relatively parallel. The exceptions include higher pretest scores in total reading and reading comprehension at Prospect (the loss in

reading comprehension may reflect regression to the mean); a lower vocabulary pretest median at Flanner House; and a higher posttest vocabulary median at Emerson.

The numbers of students tested at each library site were small; as a result, application of statistics for such small samples is unlikely to produced significant results based on size alone. For most library sites, chi square tests could not be computed due to an inadequate number of cases to fill the required cells. The small Ns also caused difficulties in other tests of significance, and no statements can be made about the results for Emerson, Flanner House, and Prospect samples.

The West Indianapolis site was the only site with an adequate N for calculating chi squares. A significant pattern was found in the reading comprehension and total reading maintenance/gain scores; they were unlikely to have occurred by chance. Wilcoxin Matched Pairs Sign Test produced the same significant results for the West Indianapolis reading comprehension and total reading maintenance and gain scores, as did the Binomial Test of Significance.

Limitations of the Study

The goal of any study is to produce meaningful results which are informative. However, the usefulness of a study's findings must be interpreted within the limitations of that study. The following points encourage caution in the interpretation of this study's results.

- The limited number of students included in the study restricts generalizations which can be made from these data. The small N is especially problematic when subdivided by grade level or library site. The lack of statistical significance on small samples is by and large a factor of sample size. This is clearly illustrated by the statistical significance of data for the total group, yet the general lack of significance in the subpart data.

- All of the students included in the study received three months of regular school instruction after administration of the March, 1989 pretest. The impact of this instruction on gain scores as compared to the impact of the summer reading program is unknown.

- The accuracy of the survey data supplied by study participants cannot be verified, e.g., number of books read, the incentive points earned, etc. Missing data (as much as 33% on certain questions) affected the completeness of information available for review.

- The relationship between the number of incentive points earned and the quality and quantity of reading done is unclear. The reliability of the assumption that when children are checking out library books, they are reading those books was not verified.

- Despite design efforts to include low achieving readers, this study generally included only average to above average readers. The sample's median percentile achievement relative to the

"average" I.P.S. student or Indiana student illustrates this point. The study did not determine whether or not the study sample is representative of the overall program, i.e., few low achieving readers in the program.

- o This study focused on a narrow range of data and outcome data, limited almost exclusively to cognitive variables. Little information related to impact on participants' reading affect was collected. No findings regarding affective attitudes or the connection between attitude and achievement can be made.

- o To date, the review of the literature has not clearly verified the concept of "summer loss in reading achievement." Further library review related to this issue is continuing.

Summary and Conclusions

1. The major hypothesis of the study was satisfied: participants in the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library's summer reading program maintained their reading achievement levels exhibited at the end of the school year. The foregoing conclusion is complicated by the unknown impact of regular school instruction following the pretest in March, 1989.

2. Based on this sample, a high proportion of the students in the summer reading program are continuing participants.

3. According to the students' self-report, a lot of books are being read by program participants; interactive reading with significant others was commonly reported.

4. Although the relationship between the number of points earned and the amount of reading done is unclear, many participants earn a large number of incentive points. The average number of points for students in this sample was 275.

5. As represented by this sample, the participants like the summer reading program. The incentive prizes are popular, as might be expected. But it is also noted that the number of students who mentioned liking reading or books as a favorite part of the program is significant. Statements such as "I like reading," "reading is fun," and "I like reading different books" confirm the primary focus of this program.

Suggestions for Future Study

This study identified several implications for further evaluation of the summer reading program. They include:

1. A descriptive study of the population attracted to the summer reading program, including determining the extent to which the program attracts low achieving students and the extent to which the characteristics of the students who are active participants differ from the characteristics of less active participants.

2. An expansion of the study to involve a more representative sample of participants, to include a control population, and a study of the major affective aspects of the program.

3. The inclusion of design features which will ensure an adequate sample of low\achieving participants.

4. The inclusion of naturalistic, analytical design techniques to evaluate the qualitative dimensions of the program.

A major limitation to this study has been the late entry of evaluation efforts in the program, resulting in hurried planning and implementation with significant impact on the timeline and data available for analysis. Future evaluation efforts should be developed in the early planning stages of the summer reading program. Such early planning would not only permit a more efficient evaluation effort, but would provide significant opportunities for making program adjustments based upon evaluative findings.

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